

Dear Distinguished Members of this Committee,

My name is Ramon Garcia from New Britain, Connecticut. I was born and raised in this state and attended the public schools here as a kid. My daughter also born in our state is currently a sophomore at a local magnet high school.

Although some improvements have been made since I was a student, there are still a number of problems and inequities that still exist.

With the passage of senate bills 274 & 1, which I wholeheartedly support, Connecticut can continue being a leader of greatness and fairness in education in our country, and be the proof and the example that change is possible! The following are some points within these bills which highlight the problems, along with viable solutions:

- Diversifying the educator workforce has a positive impact on student outcomes, for students of color and white students.
- Over the last six years, Connecticut has made strides in diversifying its educator workforce, and has reached its short-term goal of 10%. We cannot stop there.
- This year's bill, SB 274 and SB 1, must do significantly more to support educators of color to enter and remain in the field.
- We applaud the language of Section 9 in SB 1 as it invests in education bachelor degree scholarship programs for students who graduate from our Priority districts. This will incentivize talented individuals to receive their degrees with low/no debt.
- We recommend more, however. The changes can either occur in SB 274 or SB 1. Specifically:
 - We must reduce certification hurdles and costs to make sure that no student fails to become an educator because they cannot afford to pay for testing.
 - We must invest in educators already working in our Alliance districts by offering a master's degree scholarship fund. That way, educators can grow in the field and commit to remaining in our neediest districts.
 - We must provide signing bonuses for educators working in shortage areas like ELL, Special education and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math). More money should go to educators who begin working in our neediest districts.
 - We must find flexible ways to address educator shortages, like inter-district educator sharing. This allows numerous districts to offer college and career courses in partnership with neighboring districts. It reduces costs, expands access and encourages innovation.

- Our rate of change is too slow. We must provide incentives and scholarships to those who wish to enter the field, and pledge to remain in the field.
- We have the chance to be nationally recognized for this work, but we cannot delay.
- Please include the recommendations in SB 274 or SB 1 to strengthen the language and make an impact for our educators today.

Thank you so much for your time and your service to the residents of Connecticut!

Sincerely, Ramon García